The Master Key—Opening the Gate of Heaven

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 2, 1887.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 23, 1886.

"And You said, I will surely do you good." Genesis 32:12.

THE possession of a God, or the non-possession of a God, makes the greatest possible difference between man and man. Esau is a princely being, but he is "a profane person." Jacob is a weak, fallible, frail creature, but he has a God. Have you not heard of "the mighty God of Jacob"? There are many wise, careful, prudent men of the world who have no God and, truly, these in the highest sense, like the young lions, lack and suffer hunger, for their highest nature is left to famish. Those who wait upon the Lord are often very simple and devoid of ability and policy, but they shall not lack any good thing—their highest nature is well supplied from heavenly sources. This is the great difference between the two races which people the world—I mean the sons of men who say in their hearts, "No God," and the sons of God, the twice-born, who have received new life and, therefore, with heart and flesh cry out for God, even the living God!

The child of this world enquires, "Where shall I flee from His Presence?" The child of Light cries, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You." There are thus two races of men who can never blend, either in this life or in that which is to come. Deep in their innermost nature lies a vital difference—they are of two distinct seeds. My dear Hearers, you can divide yourselves without difficulty by this rule—Have you a God, or have you none? If you have no God, what have you? If you have no God, what good have you to expect? What, indeed, can be good to you? If you have no God, how can you face the past, the present, or the future?

But if you have God for your portion, your whole history is covered! The God of the past has blotted out your sin; the God of the present makes all things work for your good; the God of the future will never leave you nor forsake you! In God you are prepared for every emergency. O Man, if the God of Jacob is your God, you shall be safe at night, though you may sleep as unguarded as the Patriarch at Bethel. And you shall be secure by day, though you may be met by Esau with his 400 men! You are safe in banishment though Laban is churlish—and safe in the midst of foes, though Canaan-ites thirst for your blood—for the Lord has said, "Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm." It matters not where you go if the God of Israel is with you and says to you, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will go down with you; and I will also surely bring you up again." He shall guard you from all evil—the Lord shall preserve your soul.

Because Jacob had a God, therefore he went to Him in the hour of his trouble. He did not know how he should escape from his injured and angry brother, Esau. In fact, he believed that Esau had come on purpose to cut him up, root and branch, and so, after doing the best he could, Jacob looked to his best Friend and Helper, and cried unto his God! He who has a God will be sure to fly to Him in his distress. There is no use in having a God if you do not use Him. I am afraid that many professed Christians place their God afar off and never dream of going to Him for practical succor in the hour of danger. As well have no God, as have an unreal God who cannot be found in the midnight of our need! But what a blessing it is to be able to go to our God at all times and pour out our hearts before Him—for our God will be our Helper and that right early! He is our near and dear Friend in joy and in sorrow. Poor Jacob, in the calmer days of his life, had failed to walk with his God as his father, Abraham, had done. But now a storm has overtaken him and he flies to the Lord, his God, as a mariner puts into port to escape the tempest.

Dear Friend, are you in trouble at this time and have you a God? Then go to Him in prayer at once and spread your case before Him. Have you a Rabshakeh's letter in the house? Go, like Hezekiah, and spread it before the Lord! Have you

a dying child? Then cry to the Lord as David did! Are you in the deeps with Jonah? Then let your prayer arise from the very bottoms of the mountains! Have you any bitterness in the vessel of your heart? Then pour it out before Him.

Make good use of your God and especially gain the fullest advantage from Him by pleading with Him in prayer. In troublous times, our best communion with God will be carried on by supplication. Tell Him your case—search out His promise and then plead it with holy boldness. This is the best, the surest, the speediest way of relief.

What would some of us do if we had not a God to go to? Though we are not tried and troubled as some men are— and God has set a hedge about us—yet there are times in our life when we should die of a broken heart if we could not tell our griefs to God! Like Job, we could curse the day of our birth and wish that we had never been born if we were utterly bereft of God. We would look forward to annihilation as a hopeful thing if we could not speak with God, our ever-gracious Friend. But when we can get away to Him and tell out the whole matter—and lay hold upon Him by the hand of faith and plead His promise—then the darkened cloud withdraws and we come out into the light, again, and sing, "This God is our God forever and ever! He will be our Guide even unto death."

Beloved, we see that Jacob had a God and that he made use of Him in prayer, but the point I want to call your attention to, at this time, is that the stress, the force, the very sinew of Jacob's prayer consisted in his pleading the promise of God with God. When he came to real wrestling with the Lord, he cried, "You said." That is the way to lay hold upon the Covenant Angel—"You said." The art of wrestling lies much in a proper use of, "You said." Jacob, with all his mistakes, was a master of the art of prayer—we justly call him, "wrestling

Jacob." He said, "I will not let You go." He gets grip for his hands out of this, "You said." With this he lays hold upon his unknown antagonist—a desperate hold which he will not relax, even though his sinew are made to shrink.

"You said" is a good grip with which to hold an honest man and not less does it lay hold on our faithful God. This will have power over any honest person, for he that speaks truly will not run back from his promise. When we come to pleading terms with God, there is nothing that so helps us as to be able to quote the promise and plead, "You said." In handling my text, which was Jacob's prayer, I shall notice, first, that it ought to be our memorial, secondly, that it is God's bond and, thirdly, that, therefore, we may make it our plea.

I. First, it ought to be OUR MEMORIAL. I mean, dear Friends, that we ought to remember, much more than we do, what God has said. If we had a silent God who, to this age had never revealed Himself by actual speech. If it were given out at this hour that now, for the first time, God was about to make a promise, how eagerly would all God-fearing men desire to hear it—and how carefully would they treasure it up! Why, every syllable would be more precious than a pearl! The very tone of the utterance would be mystic music full of meaning. You would charge your memory to embalm each word—no, to preserve each syllable in all its living force and beauty. Whatever else you forgot, you would lay up every letter of the newly-spoken promise in the archives of your soul. Ought we not to treat God's Word with equal reverence, though spoken ages ago, since it is a fact that He has spoken it?

The Lord has often spoken from the foundations of the world by His Prophets—and in these last days by His Son— and we are bound to jealously guard every single Word which He has thus given to us. He has preserved His own Words in the Scriptures—let us preserve them in our hearts. No subjects in the world can be so worthy of the consideration, the memory and the reverence of man as those upon which his Maker has deigned to give instruction. The choicest communications ever made to human minds are those which have come from the great Father. I ask you, therefore, Brothers and Sisters, if I say not rightly that God's Divine, "You have said" should be our memorial? We should lay up His Word in our hearts as men lay up gold and gems in their vaults—it should be as dear to us as life itself. My heart stands in awe of God's Word, but I am sorrowful because so many trifle with it. No good can come of irreverence towards Scripture—we ought to cherish it in our heart of hearts.

We ought to do this, first, with regard to what God has said. You notice that Jacob puts it, "You said," and then he quotes the words—"Surely I will do you good." It is an essential part of the education of a Christian to learn the promises. I always admire that fact in the life of General Gordon, who, whatever mistakes he made, was a grand Believer—a very Abraham among us in these latter days—that he always carried with him that little book called Clark's "Precious Promises," which is an arrangement of the various promises of the Old and New Testaments under different heads. The General used to consult that collection

of Divine promises and seek out that holy text which best suited his particular condition. Then he sought solitude and pleaded before the Lord that Inspired Word, believing that it was true and that

the Lord would do as He had said. By faith he looked for an answer and acted upon it! He went down through the Sudan alone, as you know, daring all manner of dangers because he believed in God. The heroism of his life grew out of his confidence in the promises. If we would be heroes, here is the food with which to sustain a noble life!

I would have all Christian people know God's promises. If you had in your house a number of checks which you believed to be good, I do not suppose that you would long be unaware of their nature and value. No merchant here would say, "I have a number of bills, drafts and checks at home somewhere—I have no doubt that they are all good and that they are my lawful property—but I do not know much about them. Their value is quite unknown to me." Such ignorance would argue insanity! Will you know your earthly wealth and never consider your heavenly riches? In the Bible there are "exceedingly great and precious promises"—shall it be said that some of God's children do not know what those promises contain? They have read them, perhaps, but they have never really searched into their meaning to see what God has promised. Of many good things provided for them, they are quite ignorant. And even in reference to their personal and present trouble they are not aware of what the Lord has promised to do for them in such a case! What a pity it would be for a trader to be short of money and to have a draft for a large amount, but not know where to find it! It would be a poor way of doing business, would it not?

Is it not a shameful thing to be dealing with God in a like slovenly fashion? Brothers and Sisters, I would that we studied God's Word much more. We read all sorts of books, but many of them are unprofitable. As for a great part of current literature, one might as well open his mouth and eat the east wind, for there is nothing that can stay his soul therein. One single sentence from God is worth all the books of the Alexandrian library, or of the Bodleian! All that has been consumed of human literature and all that still exists, if put together, would not equal one book of the Bible! O my Hearer, get to know what the Lord has said and you will be on the way to wisdom! Within the compass of, "It is written," lies Infinite Truth! If you are well instructed in it, it shall be well with you.

Moreover, Jacob also knew when God had spoken a promise, for he quotes twice the fact that God had spoken to him and said so-and-so. It is clear that he knew when the promise was spoken. I have often found peculiar comfort, not only in a promise, but in noticing the occasion for its being made. I have observed the condition of the man to whom God gave the promise and I have gathered much instruction from it. Sometimes the frame of a picture is almost as beautiful as the painting, itself, and so the occasion of the promise may be as instructive as the promise itself. The conditions under which the Lord uttered it may be so similar to our own, that they may cause the Word of the Lord to come with special

comfort to our hearts. "Surely," you say, "God, who spoke thus to Jacob, or thus to Daniel, or thus to Paul, finding me in the same condition, speaks, also, thus to me, for the promises are not of private interpretation. They are not allotments hedged in for individuals, but they are a wide and open common which is the undisputed property of all Believers. They are not confined to those to whom they were first spoken, but they reach also to us who are fellow-heirs with them."

Brethren, take pains to know what God has promised and to know when God has promised it. Note well both matter and date. These are flowers from which the bee of meditation will suck much sweetness.

There is another matter which is important for us to know, namely, to whom God made the promise. Jacob knew to whom it was spoken. He tells us in a previous verse that God had spoken a certain promise to him. "Which said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you." A promise that was made to another man will be of no service to me until I can discover that I, being in the same condition as that other man, being of like character as that other man, and exercising like faith as that other man, stand before God in the same position as he did and, therefore, the Word addressed to him is spoken, also, to me! Brothers and Sisters, I entreat you continually to study God's Word to see whether the promise is made to your character and condition—and so is made to you as much as if your name were written upon it!

Many and many a time has God brought a promise home to my own heart with such freshness that I have felt that the Bible was made on purpose for me. Yes, I have been sure that the promise was written for me, if for no other man that ever lived! When a man sees a garment left at his door which fits him exactly and is evidently cut to suit certain peculiarities of his form, he concludes that the garment was meant for him. Even so, in many a promise I see certain private marks which are the exact counterparts of the secrets of my soul—and these show that God meant me when thus and thus He spoke!

Beloved, I say to you, one and all, study much the promises of God's Word! Have them at your fingertips. Remember what things God has said to men and when He has said them—and to what kind of men He has said them—and discover, by this means, how far He has said them to you! Let this, indeed, be the forefront of your knowledge. If you cannot read the stars, yet read the promises. If you cannot study the stone book of geology, yet know the Rock of Ages and the declarations engraved thereon. If you remain a stranger to the deep things of metaphysics and philosophy, yet at least know the household privileges of the family of God. Dear child, know what your Father has said! It will be very sad if you do not. Happy heir of Heaven, know what it is to which you are an heir according to the promises and the Covenant.

Thus much upon the duty of making God's Word to live in your mind and memory.

II. Secondly, "You said, I will surely do you good"—this is GOD'S BOND.

Nothing holds a man like his word and nothing so fully fixes the course of action of the Lord our God as His own promise. We speak with the deepest reverence in reference to the great God, but it would not be reverence if we said less than this—that God has bound Himself to be true to His Word. He can do all things, but He cannot lie. If God had made no promise, He would have been free to act, or not to act—but by His promise He engages Himself to act in a certain way—and He will do so. From the necessity of His Nature, He will be faithful.

What a mighty thing, then, is a promise, since it is a bond which holds God Himself! How does it do so?

I answer, it holds Him, first, by His Truth. If a man says, "I will," it is not in his power, without a breach of truth, to refuse to make good his word. If a promise is made by one man to another, it is considered to be a matter of honor to fulfill it. Unless a man is willing to tarnish his honor and disgrace his truthfulness, he will certainly do as he has solemnly promised to do. Alas! Many persons think lightly of truthfulness—they even dare to swear lightly. And what do we think of such people? To utter solemn promises and then to disown them is not the way to be esteemed and honored. It can never be so with God. None can impeach His veracity. None shall ever be able to do so. Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He given His Word and will He not make it good?

Learn, then, when you are praying to God—whether you are saint or sinner—to take the promise and say, "O my God, You have bound Yourself to give me this blessing, for You have said that You will do so and I know You cannot lie! I am sure that You will do even as You have said, for You are a God of truth!" The promise is God's gracious bond, since His truthfulness cannot be put in question.

But, next, he who enters into an engagement is bound to keep his word or he is considered to be vacillating and changeable—the Lord is, therefore, held by His Immutability. He is God and changes not. We hear persons say, "I have changed my mind," but God is of one mind and who can turn Him? Change is written upon all human things, but listen to the Eternal—"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever," and all the promises are yes and amen in Him. The great Father of Lights is "without variableness, or shadow of turning." When the Lord made His promise, He foresaw every possible contingency and He made His promise with a determination to stand to it. Ages make no difference to Him. His promise is as fresh and unfading as when first He caused it to delight the eyes of His chosen!

This is fine pleading. You can fall upon your knees and cry, "Lord, here is Your promise; be graciously pleased to fulfill it! I know that You have not changed and that Your Word is not withdrawn. You have never run back from Your Word and You never will—therefore fulfill this Word unto Your servant, whereon you have caused me to hope." An unchanging God is the foundation of happiness to the Believer!

But sometimes men make a promise and they are unable to fulfill it from lack of power. Many a time it has cost honest minds great grief to feel that, though they are willing enough to do what they have engaged to do, yet they have lost their ability to perform their word. This is a grave sorrow to a sincere mind. This can never happen to the Almighty God. He faints not, neither is weary. To Him there is no feebleness of decline, nor failure of decay. God All-Sufficient is still His name! His arm is not shortened so that He cannot reach us, neither is His hand palsied that He cannot help us. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack in course of time, but the Lord never fails. The weakness of God is stronger than man. The least of God is greater than the most of man. The Lord cannot possibly withdraw from His Word though inability for, "with God all things are possible." Therefore, go to Him in prayer and take His promise and say, "Lord, be pleased to help Your servant, for I know that You can deliver me and I trust in You as God All-Sufficient!"

The Lord will never allow a slur to be cast upon His power, which is one part of His glorious name. He wills to make His power known and it is never according to His mind to leave that power in doubt.

Once more, the Lord's wisdom also holds Him to His promise. Men make engagements thoughtlessly and before long they realize that it would be ruinous to keep them. It is foolish to keep a foolish promise. Yet, because wisdom is not in us, we make mistakes and find ourselves in serious difficulties. It may so happen that a person may feel compelled to say, "I promised to do that which, upon more careful consideration, I find it would be wicked and unjust for me to do. My promise was void from the beginning, for no man has a right to promise to do wrong." Whatever justification an erring man may find in his folly to excuse him from fulfilling his rash promise, nothing of the kind can occur with God! He never speaks without knowledge, for He sees the end from the beginning and He is infallibly good and wise. Therefore, I say unto you, again, what a hold we have upon God because of His Character! We can plead, "Lord, You did not make a mistake when You promised me this blessing! You knew all that would happen; all my sins and all my follies were foreseen by you! You did foreknow all. Therefore be pleased to keep Your Word unto Your servant, even as now I bring it before You and ask You to fulfill it!"

I wish that I had power to make this matter plain so that every Believer who is in need and is about to pray, may see the arguments with which he may approach the Throne of the heavenly Grace.

I should not, however, complete my statement if I did not add that to go to God through Jesus Christ is to use the best and most powerful of pleas. All the attributes of God are in His Son and, moreover, the Lord Jesus deserves great things at His Father's hands. He permits us to urge His merits and use His name as our authorization—what better leverage can we desire? Is not this an overwhelming argument? The great God will deny nothing to Jesus! For His sake, He will give us all things. When we bring His Son in the arms of our faith and

lay Him before the Father, we may have whatever we need. Let us not be slow to use this august plea! Let not our Lord Jesus have to say to us, "Up to now you have asked nothing in My name."

III. So then, last of all, this may be, and this ought to be, OUR PLEA in prayer, as it was Jacob's plea—even this— "You said." We may urge the gracious promise of the Lord as pleading against our own unworthiness. Listen to Jacob's cry, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant, but You said, 'I will surely do you good.'" Is not that splendid pleading? Down in the dust he prostrates himself and then prays right up! In this fashion let my Hearer cry—"Lord, I am worthy of nothing but wrath and cannot hope to speed with You on the ground of works. But, Lord, You have said, You have said, YOU HAVE SAID!"

This must win the suit. If a man has made me a promise, he cannot refuse to keep it on the ground that I am unworthy because it is his own character that is at stake, not mine! However unworthy I am, he most not prove himself to be unworthy by failing to keep his word. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself." Everything hinges upon the Character of the Promiser. Do you not see this? When you are burdened with a deep sense of sin; when your heart is ready to break with an overwhelming consciousness of guilt; still know that "God abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself." When the surges of Divine Wrath beat upon you without a pause, confess your sin and cease not to plead with God. Acknowledge your wickedness and firmly lay hold on the promise and say, "You have said." Plead such a Word as that in Isaiah, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Say unto the Lord, "You have said, 'I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.'"

Entreat the Lord to do as He has said. Under a crushing sense of your own unworthiness, still know that all this does not alter the fact that the Lord has spoken in unchanging mercy and will surely make it good. A God of Truth must keep His promise, however unworthy you may be to whom that promise is made! Is not this most effectual help to a poor soul in drawing near to God in prayer? If you are as evil as seven devils, God will not run back from what He has promised you! If you have waded up to your throat in sin's foulest infamy, yet if there is a promise made to you and you can plead it, God will stand to His Word! Whatever you may be, God is no liar, no hypocrite, no changeling! He never made a promise to the ear to break it to the experience. He is more willing to keep the promise than we are to have it kept. Come, poor Trembler, in all your sin and defilement, with this upon your tongue—"You said and, therefore, I pray You do as You have said! Your Word says, 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us

from all unrighteousness.' Lord, I confess and I pray You to forgive." O my Brothers and Sisters, such a plea, urged by a breaking heart, must readily prevail with the great Father who waits to be gracious!

This is also good pleading as against our present danger. See how Jacob puts it with regard to his own peril. He says, "Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good." In these words he sets out his very natural fear from his brother's anger—the mother, the children, everybody would be murdered by fierce Esau—and to save himself from this threatened horror, Jacob lifts the shield of the promise and as good as says to the Lord his God, "If this calamity should happen, how can Your promise be kept? You said, 'Surely I will do you good' but, Lord, it is not good for Esau's sword to shed our blood! If You permit his anger to slay us, where is Your engagement to do good unto Your servant?" This reminds one of the plea of Moses, when he asked, "What will the Egyptians say?" If Israel were destroyed in the wilderness, what would Jehovah do for His great name? This is a prevalent argument.

Brethren, what is your present trouble? One sighs out because he knows not where to look for food and raiment. But there is a Word of the Lord for that need—"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." There is another, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And another, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Can you not go to the living God with these words of His upon your tongue and beg Him to be as good as His promise? Say in so many words, "Lord, I am afraid that if I am much longer without employment, I shall not have shoes for my feet, nor bread for my children and I shall be brought to a condition of utter penury—and yet You have said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you'! Lord, I plead that promise!" See whether the Lord does not deliver you.

Do you ask me, "Are you sure that God will keep His Word?" I answer, yes. I will be bound for Him at any time and in any place. Many children of God are in sore distress. I do not know how low He may let them go, but I do know that they shall never go lower than that Word—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." I cannot say with David, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," for I have seen his seed begging bread and I expect to see it again. If the seed of the righteous misbehave themselves, they shall beg their bread as other people have to do. But I can say, "I have been young and I am now in middle life; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken; no, not so much as once!" The Lord will not turn His back on His friends, nor suffer those who trust in Him to be forsaken.

One cries, "I have been anxiously doing my best." Perhaps you have, dear Brother! Perhaps you have, dear Sister! I am very far from censuring you for doing your best. But sometimes, if you would let God do His best, it would pay you much better! You see Jacob

did his best when he divided his company and prepared a present for his brother. But it did not amount to much. It was a very poor little best, was it not? It would have come to nothing if he had not spread the matter before the Lord in prayer. Indeed, when the Lord wrestled with him at Jabbok, that night's prayer, weeping and supplication did the work! Esau was won, after all, not by Jacob's little arrangements, but by the hand of the great Lord laid upon his heart! Jacob's schemes and plans do not figure in the whole narrative except as feeble measures which the Lord rendered superfluous. The cry, "You have said," did all the work!

I beg to bear my witness, as far as my experience goes, that the shortest way out of trouble is pleading with God. Straightforward makes the best runner. You may go round about, and round about, and round about, and come at nothing—but go straight to God about the business and if He does not end it, then it is not to be ended, but is meant to go on and work out a higher good. In any case, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Try that promise—it will cover you with armor of light.

Once more, as to future blessedness, Jacob used this argument, "You said, I will surely do you good," as to all his future hopes, for he went on to say, "You said, I will make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Not as much as he should, but still, in a measure, Jacob lived in the future. He lived under the influence and expectation of the Covenant blessing. Now, Brothers and Sisters, what hope have you and I of getting to Heaven? None, except that the Lord has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish." I shall never perish, for Jesus says I never shall! He has also said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Therefore I shall be in Glory with Him and that is enough for me! All our hope of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ and the reward which He will give His saints in the day of His manifestation—all our hopes of the crown of life that fades not away and of the Beatific Vision—all depend on, "You have said." We, according to His promise, look for a new Heaven and a new earth.

Did you ever notice, in the Epistle to the Galatians, how the Apostle Paul makes this dependence upon the promise the distinguishing mark of the chosen seed? He declares that the child of the bond woman was born according to the flesh, but the child of the free woman was born according to the promise. Hagar's seed was according to the flesh, but the true seed, even Isaac, was by promise—and he says, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." It is far better to be the child of the promise than to be the child of creature strength, or the child of legal hope—for the child of creature strength and legal hope will have to go packing into the wilderness with a bottle of water and a poor slave mother for his guardian. But the child that hugs the promise, the child that lives upon the promise, the child that waits for everything till he enters his inheritance, he abides always—and all his Father's goods belong to him! Are you in the line of the promise, dear Friend? If so, get into

your chamber in your time of trouble and plead for greater mercy than you have ever enjoyed as of yet, because God has promised it to you—and He will do as He has said.

I have done when I have just mentioned, in as brief a way as I can, two or three of the things which God has said and which I want some of you to plead.

Is there one here who needs to find salvation tonight? I invite you to go home, enter your chamber, shut the door, get down your Bible and open on this passage, Isaiah 55:7—"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Now I imagine that I see you in your little room and if you do as I wish you to do, you will read the words carefully and thoughtfully, and then say, "Lord, I am one of these wicked ones! This night I desire to forsake my ways. I will have done with them. This night I desire, unrighteous as I am, to forsake my thoughts and return unto You. Now, You have said, 'I will have mercy upon him: I will abundantly pardon him.' Lord, have mercy upon me and abundantly pardon me, for You have said it!"

When you have thus prayed, expect the Lord to keep the promise. When you look an honest man in the face and say, "You promised it," you expect him to be as good as his promise. Even so, expect that God in Christ Jesus will fulfill His Word. Do not doubt. Believe God and expect the pardon and the blessing.

Next, O tried child of God, I want you to go home and open your Bible at Psalm 1:15. Put it down on a bit of paper, will you? Read, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." Put your finger on that text and then kneel down and say, "Lord, here I am calling upon You! It is a day of trouble. Deliver me, that I may glorify You." Believe that God means His promise and is not trifling with you. On the other hand, do not trifle with His Word, but make business of it and wait upon the Lord to have His promise made good! Some big-mouthed folk will promise anything, but they perform nothing. God is not after their order—I pray you, do not treat Him as if He were! He will hear the cry of the humble and He will remember for them His Covenant.

Is there a poor soul here seeking salvation who cannot get at either of these promises? Then go home and look up John 3:18—"He that believes on Him is not condemned." Go and plead that, and say, "I believe on Jesus Christ and, therefore, I am not condemned. Lord, give me to feel the peace which comes of Your justifying Grace!"

If that Scripture does not suit you, there is one more upon which I, myself, lived for months in the days of my self-despair. It is found in Romans 10:13—"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I remember getting hold of that passage and feeling that it was a door of hope to my soul! Let me quote it in full. "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him: for whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." My heart said, "I call upon His name. I trust in Him. I pray to Him. If I perish, I will perish crying to Him and

calling upon Him!" And on that promise I lived until I found the Lord! I pray that some of you may go home and plead in the same manner, "Lord, I call upon You; therefore fulfill Your Word and let salvation come unto my house!"

Do you believe that God speaks the truth? If you do, you have living faith within you! Can you trust God to keep His promise? If you can, the work of Divine Grace has already begun in your soul! You are no dead sinner any longer. You are not under condemnation. "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." You have a measure of that everlasting life within you at this moment because you have a measure of faith in God! Oh, for power, now, to turn that faith to practical use by an earnest, pleading prayer! "Lord, do as You have said!" Such a prayer will soon bring peace and rest to your soul.

God bless you, dear Friends! I feel much pleasure in addressing you at this time. If I have exceeded the time, you may well excuse it, for I am not always well enough to address you. Oh, how I have wearied to be in my pulpit! I would ask nothing more of God than to give me bread and water and permit me to occupy this pulpit on every occasion when I ought to be here! But I cannot, as yet, get that privilege at His hands, for it is not a matter of promise. If He had said I should always be in good health, I am sure Satan, himself, could not make me ill! Having, therefore, no specific promise, I am satisfied to accept the general assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God. From this assurance I know that I shall have such good health or ill-health as shall be good for me! What more can I desire than that the Lord's will should be done in my mortal body, whether by weakness or by strength?

This, however, I will do—by God's help I will preach as earnestly as I can when I do preach—and I will speak as plainly, as pointedly and as earnestly as possible when I am allowed to open my mouth in His name. Oh, that God might give me every soul in this place at this hour! And He will do it if we go to Him in humble prayer, pleading what He has said! The Lord is able to bless the word which we preach to an incalculable extent. There is no limit to the good which He can work by this one sermon! Oh, my dear Hearer, your hope does not lie in what you can say, but in what the Lord has said! Think little of the word of man, but think everything of the Word of God! Believe it for yourself and see if it is not fulfilled. Cling to the promise, come what may! The promise will hold you as surely as you hold the promise! God will be true to His promise and true to you, for Jesus Christ's sake—be you true to Him. Amen.